1: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1938 AV7 Burusho AV7



these narrow planks placed side by side and pierced by horizontal holes through which two parallel rods are threaded; the hinge is a longer piece of wood pointed at both ends and rotating into holes in threshold and lintel; while the whole is secured by an ingenious wooden lock. Most villages, however, now possess a carpenter or two, trained in the P.W.D. workshop at Gilgit and armed with plane and saw, who can produce more Europeanized doors and cupboards, to the greater comfort of their owners and the selfish regret of the anthropologist. The old, home-made door is still in use for barn and byre.

Every peasant family is almost entirely self-supporting and independent, eating the produce of its own laboriously and beautifully terraced fields (PLATE I), wearing the woollen cloaks and caps spun and woven from the wool of its own sheep, and booted from the skin of its own beasts. The only foreign garments worn are the cotton shirts and trousers of comparatively recent introduction, now considered indispensable by both sexes, and the merry little cotton caps, plain or silk-embroidered, which have replaced the heavy woollen salvation-army bonnet of the women. Butter is made and water carried in skins; grain and flour are carried in skin-bags or sacks and stored in skin-sacks or wooden bins. Rugs, saddlebags and ropes are woven of goat's hair.

In a country where no unirrigated tree can grow, timber is very scarce. An old apricot or appletree is sometimes available, or the root of an old vine, otherwise the only general timber is the poplar, grown primarily for poles and rafters, and the willow, absolutely essential for baskets (PLATE II), a dozen varieties of which are needed for carrying apricots, manure, dry leaves, straw etc., and for storing potatoes and dried fruit.

The soil of Hunza is unimaginably poor, consisting in fact of little but powdered-up mountain side. The scarcity of water means also the non-existence of pasture, and the few animals that can be fed eke out a spartan existence on the scraps of grass growing on the rare semi-irrigated strips of hillside or beside the water-channels, and on such weeds amongst the growing crops as are not earmarked for human consumption or remain after the crops have been reaped. This scanty provision is supplemented by the autumn harvest of dry leaves (not one of which lies on the ground ungarnered), the straw and stubble, and occasionally a small quantity of dried grass. Only a few families command enough land and water to grow a little lucerne for fodder. The most livestock that the average household of 10 to 20 persons

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7



under-valued, but a boy will bring a wife to the house and children to the hearth, while a daughter will take her labour and her children to her husband's home.

In pre-British days the Hunza men bore a bad name in Central Asia as daring raiders. They are a hardy, fearless race, and they would strike a track through uninhabited and uninhabitable mountain country, leaving dumps of food at intervals as they went, fall on a rich caravan travelling from Leh to Yarqand, carry off the spoil, and return—via their food dumps—to divide the proceeds, the lion's share of which fell, of course, to their brigand chief. Any prisoners captured were sold as slaves into Afghanistan or Central Asia. Alternatively they would raid across the river into Nagir and come back with slaves and cattle.

Since such a form of life invites reprisals the Hunza people lived walled in in tight-packed villages close under their forts. We had in Aliábád the old fort-village, built on a promontory, with ravines protecting it on both sides, surrounded by a wall whose twelve beacon towers could send warning of a raid up and down the river—"and the red glare on Skiddaw roused the burghers of Carlisle." Only one of these beacon towers now remains and the crowded hovels are falling to decay. Since the *Pax Britannica* has come, the peasant builds his house and stores his crops out amongst his fields and orchards—without even a watchdog. A few conservative families move into their old "town house" in winter time perhaps for warmth and companionship, perhaps merely to make a change.

These famous raids were primarily the sport of chieftains, and the peasants of to-day find adventure enough, and danger enough, in their daily life not to regret them. The profits of such raids, which welcomely supplemented the scanty produce of the fields, are nowadays more than compensated by the money which the British put into circulation. The Mir draws a small and well-earned salary for his services as guardian of the frontier, a grant for keeping up the road through his territory, and a subsidy for his bodyguard of twenty-four men or so. Any sons the peasant can temporarily spare take service with the Gilgit Scouts, in the Public Works or other Govern-

463 ment departments, act as postal runners or dispensary assistants, do part-time jobs as "levies," or enter the private employment of British officers. Travel where you will in the Agency, some enterprising Hunza man is there before you, as carpenter or washerman, as touring merchant or in Government employ. You may even meet an old Hunza taxi-driver in Bombay or a Hunza *chaprasi* in Lahore.

177 167 At first the Mir rather discouraged these farther-afield adventures, and not unwisely. New ideas, new customs, new dress, imported from abroad might well upset the happy balance of the home civilization; but the increasing pressure of population—a dubious benefit the *Pax Britannica* is wont to bring—makes some outlet necessary for ambitious youth, and some supplement necessary for home support, and the Mir's policy has been modified accordingly. With rare exceptions the travellers' hearts remain in their Hunza highlands; they go for a few years and return with newly acquired skill, with a set of carpenter's tools it may be, with a smoothing-iron or a sewing machine, to resume work on the family farm and earn a little "on the side."

593 342 We heard that a new house was being built by a certain Kalbi (not the Levy; one of another clan) and were invited to go down—some hundreds of feet—and see it in its half-finished state. "It must cost a lot to build a new house," we said. "How did you come to have money enough to spare?" "Well, you see, I have two sons away working—thank God." And, in fact, except in the few cases where the Hunza man goes over-far afield to Bombay or the Panjab, and needs his own earnings to support a down-country family, the Hunza son remits home every spare anna, knowing well that it will be spent on the home he himself will presently enjoy and share. When he comes back on leave he brings his mother an aluminium cooking-pot or basin to jostle the stone *balesh* and wooden bowl, or an iron bucket which incongruously companions the local gourd when his sisters go to draw the drinking water.

342 In theory there are any number of sizes and patterns of house which you can build in Hunza: the cow-pattern, the ant-pattern, and half a dozen more, but in actual fact there are

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

# Chapter 21

## HUNZA CRAFTS

One of the most refreshing things about Hunza is the absence 402
of machinery. Every essential tool and utensil can be made and
mended at home, and every individual enjoys the self-respect 415
that comes from the exercise of necessary craftsmanship. The 412
picturesquely asymmetrical stone cooking-pots, oil-jars, and 463 ●
crusie-lamps have each been fashioned by father or grand- 286
father, or it may be great-grandfather. Each has its own indi- 283
viduality and its own history. The ladles and wooden spoons
of delightful and often fantastic shape have been cut out from
suitable branched bough or root—handle and bowl in one piece,
no two alike. Your own carefully planted and tended willows
supply the flexible withies for a dozen kinds of basket, and the
man or woman who could not construct the one required
would be hard to find. Reels and spindles for spinning, bobbins
and shuttles for weaving, wooden hoes and shovels, two-
prong forks cut in one piece from the tree or the graceful
five-pronged winnowing forks with neat and skilful lashings of
gut holding their curved teeth in place, the plough, the frame
and heddles of the loom, the treadles and framework of the
lathe that turns the wooden bowl, are all home-made. You [281]
cure the skins of your own beasts for sacks and bags and boots.
When the women want more wool for spinning, any man at
any moment will shear another sheep while the women and
children hold its legs.

The only work that the home cannot itself tackle is the 326
ironwork—a very recent substitute for stone and bone and 177
horn. An occasional iron pick or shovel, fork or crowbar is 412
brought up "from below" (India or Kashmir) by a returning 563

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7



homes, and the women know no other. The existence of this interesting language-island, within the language-island of Burushaski, had been unsuspected by European scholars till DL set about investigating it. He could not devote much time to it, but gleaned enough to establish the fact—inherently probable—that it is of Indian origin, and that it has (less predictably) interesting affinities with the Gypsy of Europe, which survives even in South Wales. It is a curious fact that the Doms of Gilgit (who conjecturally are of the same stock as the Doms of India and the Béricho of Hunza) have abandoned their own language in favour of Shina. This may well be because Shina has a close relationship to Sanskrit and the modern Indian vernaculars, which Burushaski lacks, and is incomparably easier to learn.

While every Hunza family plies its own essential crafts, there are a few specially expert folk—like the master-carpenters of whom I have spoken—who undertake the weaving, turning, and milling for their neighbours. Amongst the two hundred families of Aliábád there were perhaps seven or eight recognized weavers, twice as many millers, and at least one lathe-master.

We were fortunate in having, on the Middle Channel above us within a few minutes' climb, two master-weavers, old Dádo of No. 7 and Ustád Nadíro of No. 8. The narrow road-plus-water-channel that passed their houses was barely 3 feet wide, and was one of the main internal thoroughfares; but this had not prevented them from digging themselves a loom-pit under the shelter of the house wall, leaving an effective track of scarcely a foot for passers-by to squeeze along, cows, sheep, goats, or people. No one seemed to resent the encroachment. At a pinch you could always step down into the water-channel, full or empty as it might chance. During the pressure of harvest these pits had stood untenanted, and I wondered when the weaving was going to begin.

One day I had been sitting with one of Afiato's daughters-in-law, who was embroidering a festive cap for herself, asking the names of the various stitches and patterns and studying her style of sewing. There is a huge vocabulary connected with

Lorimer L-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1936 AVT Burusho AVT



These various subjects of general interest and activity postulate the existence of a large vocabulary relating to agricultural processes, implements and products; irrigation, fruit culture and the management of live stock and the treatment of their products. 192

**Crafts.**

Any people who are in the main self-supporting must have developed, and must command, a number of essential crafts. Here it is only possible to enumerate very briefly the principal crafts practised by the Burusho. They include: 463 ●

Building: wall-building without mud; house building, stone-and-mud walls and mud-plastering.

Woodwork: supporting pillars, roofing timber, shaped and unshaped, door-frames, doors and windows. Agricultural implements: ploughs and various forms of wooden shovel and pitchfork; wooden bowls and spoons. Wearing and milling apparatus.

Spinning: hair and woollen thread and twisting into yarn and ropes.

Weaving: woollen home-spun for clothing; hair-cloth for bags and mats.

Basketwork of willow twigs: various forms of baskets and creels.

Preparing skins: for bags for grain etc. and for holding water, milk etc.; also thongs, foot-wrappers and boots.

Metal work: a little iron-work.

Sewing: clothes.

Milling: water-mills are used for grinding flour.

Salt-washing: a method of obtaining salt from saline earth by dissolving it out is sometimes practised.

Gold-washing: the river sand is washed to extract gold-dust. This is done for the Tham of Hunza at certain places, by the lower classes only. I do not know that it is practised privately.

Wine-making and distilling: the latter is now prohibited.

**Imports.**

The Burusho are dependent on the outside world for their supply of metals and in general for all metal manufactures, e.g. plough- 439

3: Lorimer L-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1935 AV7 Burusho



439 shares, sickles, shovel-blades, axes, adze-heads and cooking-pots. A few aluminium vessels may now be seen in the hands of the peasants. Any iron work done locally is done by the Bēricho (sg. Bērits; b'e·ri·čo, b'e·ri·ts), corresponding to the Ḍoms of Gilgit, who provide the musicians and metal-workers of the community and are regarded as at the bottom of the social scale. They are probably, as elsewhere, of foreign (Indian?) origin. Carpentry, formerly also [335] within the sphere of the Bericho, is now generally practised by individual Burusho.

Cotton cloth, now used by practically the whole population of both sexes for shirts and trousers, is imported. Some foreign shoes and sandals may also be seen. All the sugar and most of the salt used are also imported. Both are in demand and the import apparently does not satisfy the public desire, the cost being no doubt the obstacle.

● 463 Tailors and washermen form no part of the indigenous social scheme, but nowadays one or two men can be found who have some skill in these crafts acquired abroad.

**Arts.**

531 I have seen very little of decoration or ornamentation in any medium, nor any aesthetic production which could be classified under the heading of the plastic arts. Embroidery until very recently was practised only in the harems of the élite. The ordinary women who are free to pursue, in the open and unveiled, their domestic functions and many kinds of agricultural work, are sufficiently occupied to feel little urge to concern themselves with such elegant triflings, but the girls and young women, before and after marriage, embroider caps for themselves with taste and skill.

Occasional specimens of wood-carving are to be seen, chiefly in the derelict masjids.

535 563 534 Of the other arts, dancing is a traditional and living institution, and is still practised on ceremonial occasions by even the highest ranks of society. The accompanying music is, however, supplied by the despised Bēricho. Occasionally the notes of a flute in the hands of an amateur is heard and the sitār is known.

9: Lorimer L-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1935 AV7 Burusho AV7



621 limits and were originally it seems centred round the *khan* (khan, fortress or strong-place). The general security of later times has led to the scattering of habitations seen in more recent settlements like Aliabad. Inside these village-units, such as Baltit, Altit, Ganish, Haidarabad etc. there survive the names of tribal or class divisions. How far these divisions play any significant part in the communal life of the present day is a subject that remains for investigation.

565 463 Society is recognised as divided into the following general classes:

1. Thamo: the Royal Family, including:
   i. the Karèli, the royally-born on both sides.
   ii. the Arghundaro, of commoner origin on the female side, but in Hunza children of wedlock.
2. Uyōngko or Akābirting — "The Great" — those who enjoy, or have the right to occupy, superior offices in the State, e.g. the posts of Wazir, Trangfa, Yarpa and Farāj.
   These two classes do not work with their hands.
3. Bār, Bārè Sīs, — These cultivate their land and work with their own hands, but, if personally worthy, are eligible for appointment to posts by the Tham. They are not required to carry loads or perform any inferior class of work.
4. Shadarsho — a large class who get their title ("servants") from their eligibility for employment by the Tham as couriers to convey notice of his movements, carry messages etc. They are exempted from menial labour. This class is increasing by recruitment from the next below.
5. Baldakūyo or Tsilgalasho — these are liable to have to carry loads for the Tham and Uyongko, and to wash for gold. They are exempt from the payment of taxes. The Tsilgalasho are Baldakuyo who are in the employment of Uyongko families and then do not carry loads, but on quitting such employment they revert to the status and obligations of the Baldakuyo. The numbers of this class are declining. Their ascent into the ranks of the Shadarsho is now controlled by the Tham; formerly it was in the hands of the Wazir and Trangfa.

3: Lorimer L-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1935 AV7 Burusho AV7



6. Bērīcho — now of two classes:
   i. ĕgherasho bērīcho — musicians who provide music on all public occasions.
   ii. ḍak ètasho bērīcho — blacksmiths.[1]

The functions of the Bericho are undergoing a process of extension. They now fetch firewood for the Tham and thorns for protecting enclosures. They also do plastering work for him. A few serve as sweepers. Their status is said to be rising. The Burusho will now eat food prepared by them, which they would not formerly do.

In both Hunza and Nagir the supreme power resides in an autocracy exercised by the Tham, or Mīr. The two royal families derive from a common source and are inter-related by subsequent marriages. This joint royal family claims to have come from Baltistan and to have been established in Hunza and Nagir for the last six hundred years.

Each village group is an administrative unit and the Tham is represented in it by one to three Uyōngko (Uyūmko) or Trangfāting (sg.s uyūm = *great*, trangfa). Under their direction these officials have Cherbuting (sg. cherbu, čerbu) who transmit orders to the public. Where the Tham owns land he has a steward, or personal representative, called a Yarpa, who again has subordinates under him to supervise the division of the water-supply.

For the settlement of cases and disputes of all kinds there is in Hunza a long progressive series of "courts", if one may use the term. First the case is dealt with by the heads of the two houses and the two families in conclave. Failing settlement it is referred to the Headman of the community (girāmè uyūm; giramε uyuᵊm). Thirdly: again failing settlement, it is referred to the Headmen of the Four Clans (wālto girāmichīngè uyōngko; waᵊlto giraᵊmičiŋε uyoᵊŋko) who proceed to the "gate" of the *khan* and adjudicate on it.

[1] The following are the phonetic renderings of the Burushaski words in the above paragraphs: 1. Thamo; karᵊli; arɣᵊndero; 2. uyoᵊŋko *or* uyuᵊmko; akaᵊbirtiŋ; waziv; traŋfa; yərpa; faraɣ; 3. barε sis; 4. ɛaderšo; 5. baldakuᵊyo; tsilgalašo; 6. berričo; eᵊyərašo; ḍak etašo.

7:Tobe C, T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

that the old palace is up at least another 500 or 600 feet. It was perched precariously on a huge outcropping of rock that jutted straight up into the air and the entire surface of the pinnacle was used for the building. There was no superfluous area surrounding it.

I had a long list of questions prepared and I knew even before I started that Sultan Ali could not give me all the answers because many of the questions were strictly horticultural—others dealt with dietary principles. I wanted to talk to farmers and individual people and housewives on both of these subjects.

I asked if he could arrange to take me to a group of farmers or even an individual farmer . . . that is, farmers who were capable and efficient—the better, the more intelligent and prosperous ones . . . so that I might delve into their ways and means of field husbandry.

He nodded, "This will be done. When would you like to talk to them?"

"Tomorrow morning, if it can be done," I replied.

"That's fine. I will arrange it!"

Wherever it was possible, I wanted to get my information direct from the people concerned. There is actually only one class of people in Hunza and one occupation, which is farming. I only know of one shop in the area and it sells mostly goods that have been brought in by the Chinese caravans that have passed through. I don't doubt also that there were some goods in this same shop that came into Hunza via Rawalpindi and Gilgit.

However, it was plain and clear that 900 of the citizens of Hunza out of 1000 made their living by means of farming. Therefore, as I had come to Hunza primarily to study the farming and horticultural methods of the people, the preparation of the foods they ate,

8: Clark N-5 (1948-1951)1963
AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza
[P.42-C]

286
291
292

[463]
[433]

CRAFTSMEN like this weaver are not numerous in Hunza; the demanding mountain economy requires the full-time effort of the society to raise food.